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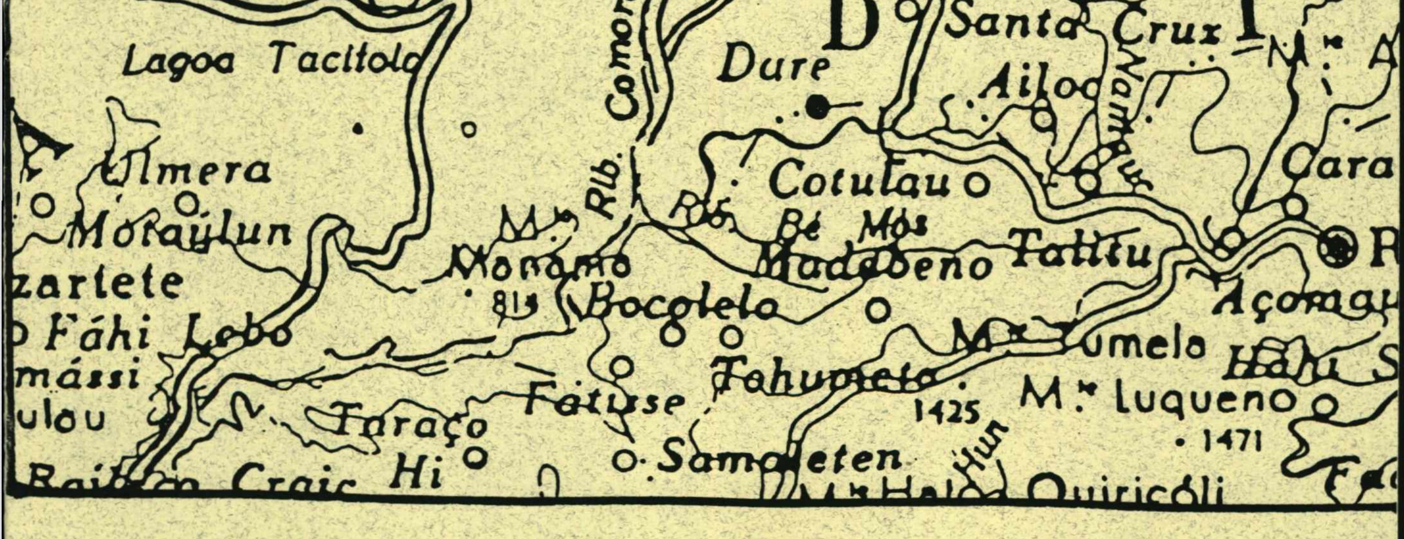
East Timor:

Just a political question?

Dr Geoffrey Hull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ACSJC OCCASIONAL PAPER No. 11

The Santa Cruz massacre of 12th November 1991 brought the enduring question of East Timor to the public notice in Australia. Hardly a day goes by without media coverage. It is in this context that Dr Geoffrey Hull's paper is written: the demand for such a paper exists not just in social justice groups, but in the wider Catholic Church and the community at large.

The ACSJC hopes that Dr Hull's paper will generate feedback which we can draw upon for articles in Justice Trends. Bishop Belo has spoken out recently of his ideas for some sort of autonomy for East Timor, short of independence. This would need the pre-condition of a drastic scaling down of the Indonesian military presence. The ACSJC would particularly welcome reactions to this idea from readers of this Occasional Paper.

+ Bishop W J Brennan
Chairman, ACSJC
Bishop of Wagga Wagga

May 1992

The Author

Geoffrey Hull is a Catholic layman and lecturer at the Sydney University Language Centre. He holds two degrees in historical and comparative philology and is conversant with a large number of European and middle Eastern languages, having obtained Level 3 NAATI qualifications in ten of them. At present he is working on a grammar and dictionary of Tetum, the *lingua franca* of East Timor, in collaboration with the East Timorese community in Australia.

Think Again. . .

Catholics with conservative political leanings can display unfortunate double standards when it comes to investigating and condemning crimes against humanity committed by authoritarian governments. In the conservative Catholic press gallons of ink have flowed in just condemnation of the savage persecution of Christians in Communist states around the world. Marxist-inspired attempts at genocide, such as the murder of millions of Cambodians by Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge, have been fully exposed and rightly decried. But on the question of atrocities committed by anti-Communist régimes there seems to be a different attitude. The slaughter of priests in the Basque Country by the army of General Franco during the Spanish Civil War, the Croatian Ustasha's genocidal campaign against the Serbs during World War II, the *desparecidos* (missing persons) of Chile and Argentina — in such cases the reaction of the conservative Catholic press has too often been silence or, worse, an attempt to whitewash or even justify the unjustifiable.

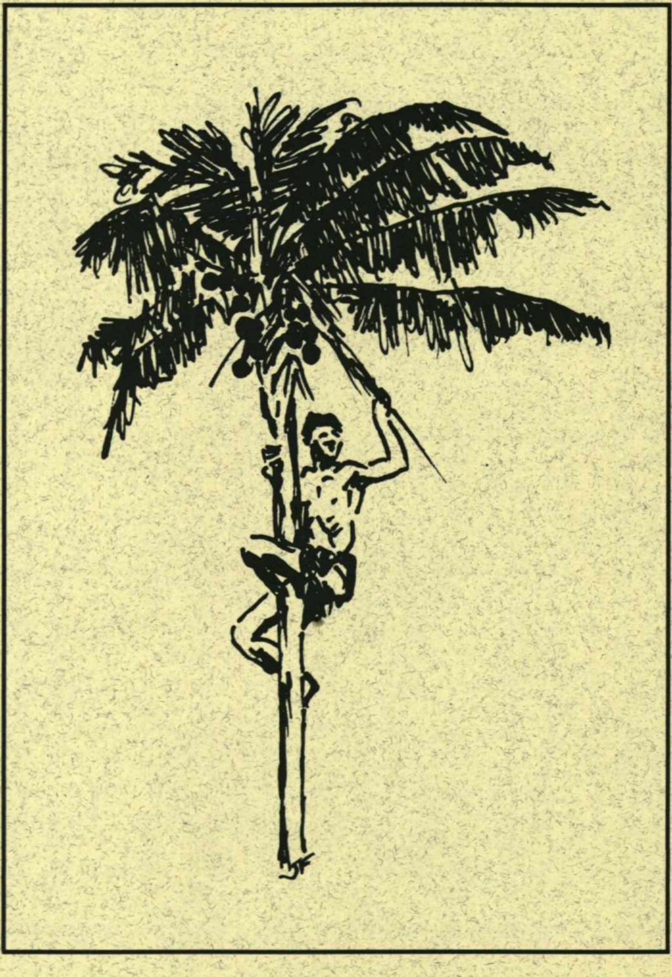
There can never be any ideological justification for crimes against groups of innocent human beings, and it is one of the duties of Christians to condemn such outrages wherever and by whomever they are committed. Terrible crimes have been committed in our region of the world since 1975, when the small nation of East Timor was conquered by the armed forces of the fifth largest country in the world. Since then the story of East Timor has rarely been told without a large dose of political bias. Left-wing opponents of Indonesia tend to exaggerate the facts while that state's right-wing allies seek to minimize or deny them. Both approaches tend to present as a primarily *political* question a problem with important religious and cultural implications. The reality is that one cannot understand the East Timor question without an appreciation of the cultural impact of Portuguese colonialism and the moral role of the local Catholic Church, today the heart and soul of the Maubere (East Timorese) nation.

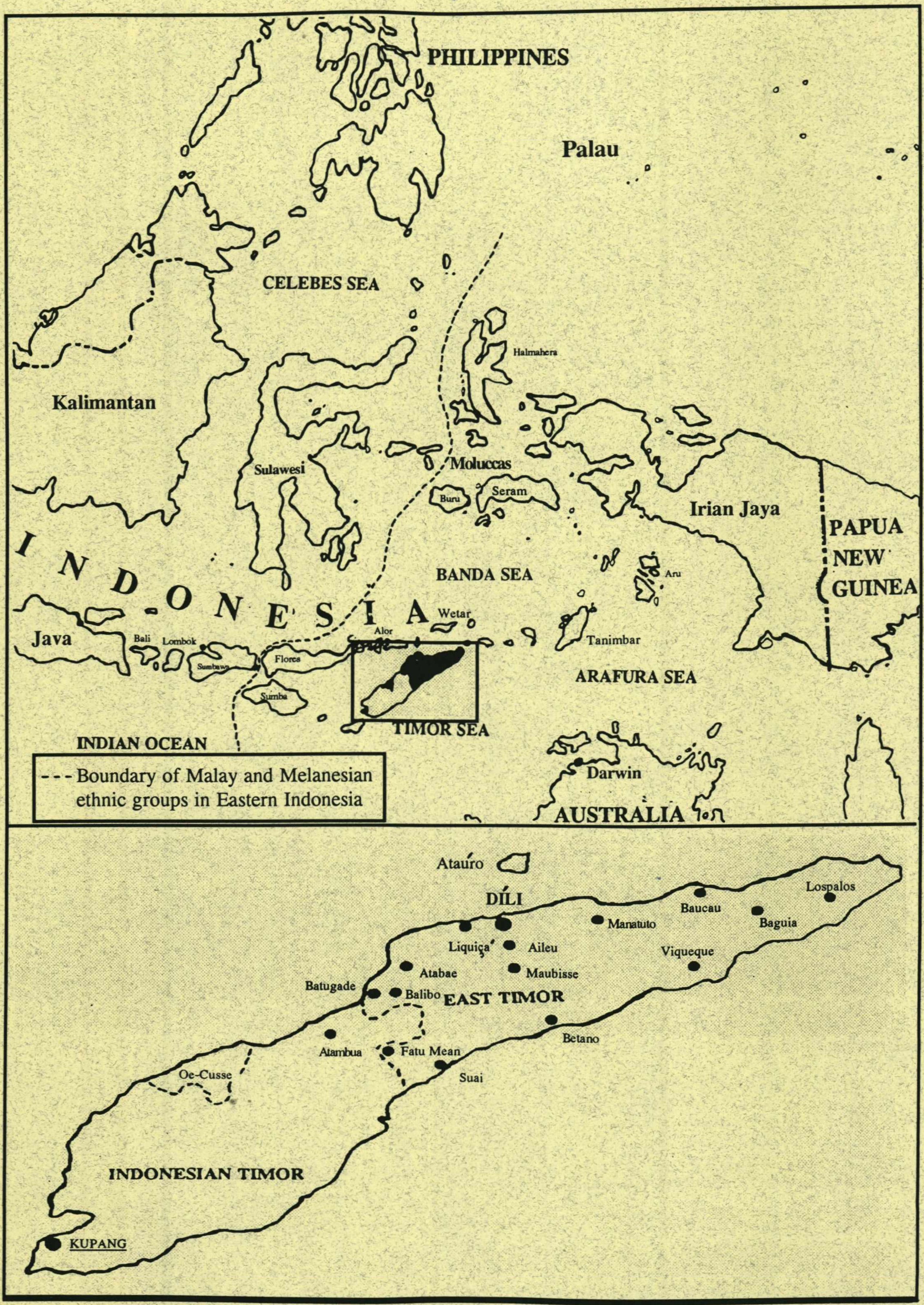
East Timorese are not Indonesians

East Timor is our closest Catholic neighbour. After the arrival of the first Aboriginal nomads in Australia thousands of years ago, the earliest foreigners to visit our shores were very probably natives of Timor. This island, after all, the largest in the Lesser Sunda group of the Malay Archipelago, lies just over 400 kilometres off the Northern Territory coast. Among the falsehoods commonly spread abroad about the Maubere is that they are ethnically Malay like the Javanese who now rule them. That they are basically a non-Malay people is evident not only from their physiognomy, but from the Western civilization they have willingly adopted. Or, as the Timorese chaplain in Sydney puts it: *Indonésios e Timorenses são como água e gasolina* "Indonesians and Timorese are like water and petrol": they don't mix.

The natives of Timor are actually of Papuan stock, mingled with later waves of Proto-Malay immigrants from the north-west, and even today they most resemble the inhabitants of New Guinea. Although Papuan vernaculars survive in remote districts, most Timorese speak a Malayo-Polynesian (Austronesian) language called *Tetum (Tetun, Teto)*, or one of several related dialects. And while Tetum is ultimately related to Indonesian, it is not mutually intelligible with it, being closer in structure and vocabulary to the languages of Melanesia and Polynesia. In fact the inhabitants of all the south-eastern Indonesian islands from Sumba and Flores to West Irian are ethnically and linguistically more Melanesian than Malay. The name *Timor* itself, meaning 'east' in Malay, indicates a peripheral region, 'the eastern island' in relation to Indonesia proper ('East Timor' in Indonesian is the tautological-sounding *Timor Timur*). Significantly, the bulk of Indonesia's Christian minority (2.1%) lives in these ethnically diverse eastern islands.

Sighted by António de Abreu in 1511, Timor's first European settlement was made by three Portuguese Dominicans from Malacca in 1562, and the whole of the island had been conquered by Portugal by 1642. But being rich in sandalwood, it was also coveted by the Dutch, who took the western zone less the then capital Lifau and the surrounding enclave of Oe-Cusse in 1651, and Timor has been politically and culturally divided ever since. (Dutch West Timor became part of the new Republic of Indonesia in 1950; its people are predominantly Protestant, with Catholic and Moslem minorities). Socially, the people of East Timor fall into two broad groupings. The inhabitants of the towns and larger villages are culturally latinized, speaking both Portuguese and a local language, and devoutly Catholic in faith. Among this group are a few white descendants of Portuguese colonists and the more numerous *Mestiços*, or persons of mixed blood. The majority of the indigenous population who inhabit the rugged interior speak no Portuguese. They lead a tribal existence and most of them practise a syncretistic mixture of Catholicism and animism.




PHILIPPINES
Palau
CELEBES SEA
Halmahera
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BANDA SEA
Aru
Wetar
Alor
Java
Bali
Lombok
Sumbawa
Flores
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ARAFURA SEA
TIMOR SEA
INDIAN OCEAN
- - - Boundary of Malay and Melanesian ethnic groups in Eastern Indonesia
Darwin
AUSTRALIA
Ataúro
DÍLI
Lospalos
Baucau
Baguia
Manatuto
Liquiça
Aileu
Viqueque
Atabae
Maubisse
Batugade
Balibo
EAST TIMOR
Betano
Atambua
Fatu Mean
Suai
Oe-Cusse
INDONESIAN TIMOR
KUPANG

East Timor and its region

Cinderella of the Portuguese Empire

Before 1975 East Timor was the most backward and remote of Portugal's colonies. Since Portugal had emerged as the poorest country in post-war Western Europe, it was perhaps understandable that the needs of East Timor should have ranked very low on the list of national priorities. No Portuguese head of state ever visited East Timor, and one senior member of the Lisbon government admitted in 1964 that the territory was a financial liability and would have been handed over to the United Nations had it not been for fear of weakening Portuguese rule in the rich African colonies of Angola and Mozambique.

A few facts will suffice to show the neglect and misery in which the Portuguese allowed their colony to languish until the last years of their rule. It was only from 1959 onwards that such essential things as electricity, adequate medical facilities, a radio station, wharves, durable bridges, and sealed roads and airstrips came to East Timor. Three fifths of the population lived by primitive subsistence farming in rural isolation. Malnutrition was widespread, infant mortality was often as high as 50%, and illnesses like tuberculosis, pneumonia and gonorrhoea (the latter spread by the Portuguese army) were rife. Before 1960 only 2% of Timorese children in a population of 517,000 received a primary education; there was only one high school with some 200 students. Coffee production was the main local industry, but most of the profits of the huge plantations went either to the Portuguese administration or to the favoured Chinese community, who owned all the businesses and kept a stranglehold over the economy. Some of the Mestiços owned land and occupied prominent posts in the colonial administration, but most educated Timorese worked as government clerks or made careers in the army. The native population resented their practical exclusion from the professions by the presence of doctors, lawyers and teachers from Portugal. And a particular grievance was the way in which the Chinese were allowed to invest their profits in Taiwan instead of supporting local agricultural ventures.

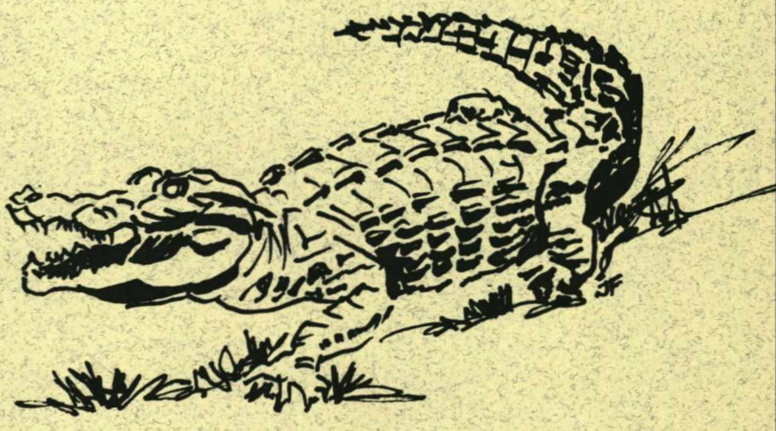
Before 1970 life in East Timor was conservative at all levels. In 1896 the territory had been separated administratively from Macao, acquiring the status of a distinct colony in 1953. In that year the Organic Law of Portuguese Overseas Territitories turned all Portugal's colonies into 'overseas provinces'. This change in status was made by the Salazar régime in order to get round the United Nations' Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, and it made no difference to the actual administration of the territory. Timor was not formally declared an overseas province for ten years, and the function of the Legislative Council established along corporative lines in 1964 was to "advise and assist" the Portuguese governor, who retained the monopoly of political power. The Council's elected and nominated members represented the moneyed and literate classes, as well as the *liurais* or regional chiefs, who strongly supported the colonial régime because of its non-interference policy which left them a free hand in their hereditary districts. Nationalism was therefore not a major force in East Timor.

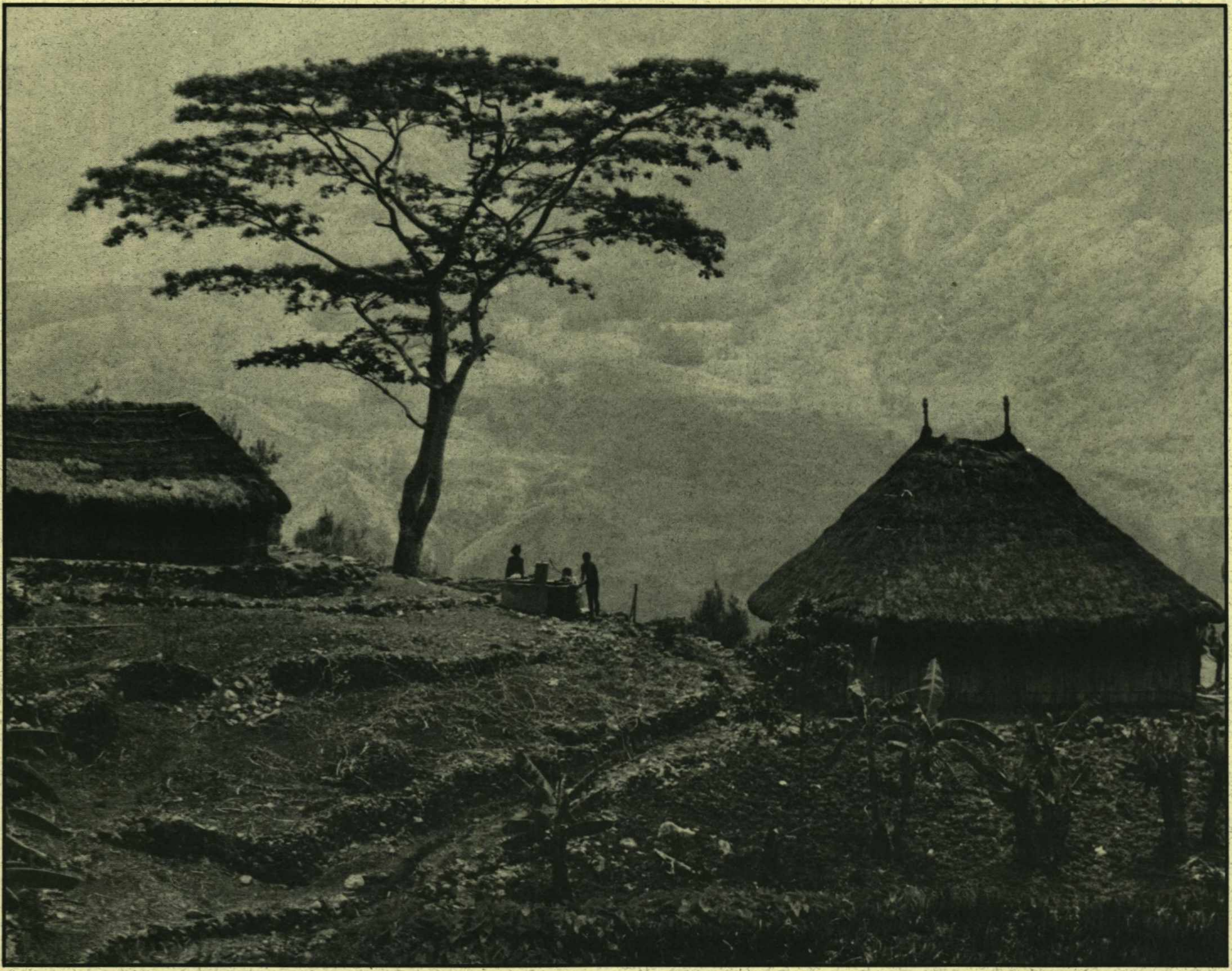
The Role of the Catholic Church

While there was little publicly expressed discontent with Portuguese rule in the 1960s, the first allegiance of the Timorese was not to the colonial government but to the Catholic Church, or rather to its missionaries. The Catholic clergy commanded enormous respect in East Timor, even from the pagans of the interior. The local priest was acknowledged as the natural leader of the community, and people sought his protection against the abuses of the Portuguese officials and the tribal chiefs. During the terrible Japanese occupation, when the Timorese aided Australian troops at the cost of some 40,000 native lives, the bonds between the missionaries and the people grew even stronger. Most of the few schools operating in the colony before 1960 were built and run by the missionaries, many of them Salesian priests and Dominican and Claretian nuns.

This enormous prestige of the Catholic clergy is all the more surprising when one considers that in 1952 there were no more than 60,000 Timorese Catholics, 13% in a population of 450,000, served by 33 Portuguese and one foreign priest. But what impressed the Timorese most about the missionaries was their dedication. Whereas the European officials and professionals spent a maximum of three years in the least attractive of Portugal's colonies, these religious men and women came to the country to spend many years or even the rest of their lives in the service of the Maubere.

The evangelization of East Timor had made slow progress for a number of reasons. There was a chronic shortage of missionaries, but the work of the few operating in the colony was suspended and nearly undone for fifty years between 1834 and 1874 as a result of the anti-clerical legislation of the Liberals then in power in Lisbon. With the declaration of the fiercely anti-Catholic Republic of 1910, the missionaries were driven out again and did not return for over a decade. During these difficult periods the clergy left in Dili (the capital since 1769) and the main centres were mainly Portuguese priests very much in the colonial mould. They saw themselves more as chaplains to the colonial administration and the old Christian families than as missionaries. Ignoring the local languages and culture, they preached and taught catechism in Portuguese, so that in the eyes of the common people becoming a Christian and becoming culturally Portuguese were much the same thing.





Religious conditions improved considerably after the signing of Salazar's Concordat and Missionary Agreement with the Vatican in 1940. This accord led to the erection of the diocese of Díli, ending the long subjection of the Church in East Timor to the see of Macao. During the 1950s the Church intensified its apostolic efforts, setting up mission stations in pagan areas. The result of this evangelizing drive was an average increase of 10,000 conversions per year. In order to create a native clergy the Portuguese Jesuits opened in 1958 the Seminary of Nossa Senhora de Fátima at Dare, which also offered a secondary education to Timorese boys not destined for the priesthood.

The fruits of the missionaries' labours were evident in 1974, when the number of Catholics had more than doubled to 196,570, i.e. 30% of a population of 659,000 (Portuguese census figures). There were now in East Timor 44 priests of whom 25 were native Timorese, 8 brothers and 49 nuns. Also involved in the Church's work were 37 catechists and 160 teachers. The diocese was still divided into only three parishes, but the mission posts now numbered eighty.

According to James Dunn, former Australian consul in Díli,

> "By the early 1970s East Timor had virtually become a Catholic state, although baptized Christians were still in the minority. Catholicism was the religion of the élite, and of all those with some semblance of education, as well as thousands of illiterates. The *liurais* and other chiefs were mostly converted in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. [. . .] As the religion of the leaders and the literate, Christianity soon became a kind of status symbol, although many baptized Christians continued to retain their animist beliefs and superstitions. On the other hand, the educated Timorese were more disciplined in the practice of their faith than were the Portuguese. For example, even some left-wing Fretilin leaders attended mass daily, a degree of devotion attained by very few expatriates". (TPB, p. 50–1).

By now native Timorese were the backbone of the Catholic Church in the province. Not only did most of the Portuguese residents not practise their faith, but many of them had anti-clerical attitudes and interfered in various ways with the religious life of the Timorese, for example forcing labourers to work on Sunday mornings and miss Mass.

Towards a Peaceful Decolonization

Yet it should not be imagined that there was any revolutionary ferment in the province before 1970. The Portuguese may have done little to improve living conditions, but they had not directly oppressed the population or (since Dom Boaventura's rebellion of 1912) committed acts of brutality against them. Although there was more education and literacy in Indonesian West Timor, the extreme poverty of that half of the island made life in East Timor look attractive. Medical services were also far superior to those existing in the former Dutch colony. Nor did the East Timorese suffer the chronic food shortages and famines that plagued their neighbours. Criticism of the colonial administration came mainly from the staff and students of the Jesuit Seminary, but this was not revolutionary in tone but rather based on the social teaching of the Church. Discrepancies between Salazar's corporative state and the principles of a corporative society set out by Pius XI in *Quadragesimo Anno* were, after all, common subjects of discussion in Church circles in Portugal.

At the beginning of 1974 Timorese loyalty to Portugal was therefore negative rather than positive. The bulk of the population, while far from anxious to throw off the Portuguese yoke, would have willingly accepted a form of home rule that did not violate the traditions of the past. And these traditions included by now not only vigorous indigenous elements but Western civilization in its Portuguese form, and Catholic Christianity. As for the younger generation of Jesuit-educated Timorese who were beginning to see self-determination as a possibility for their homeland, as long as the ultra-conservative Salazar-Caetano régime remained in power, little could be done to bring about independence. At the same time, the local intelligentsia could hardly remain unaffected by the changes beginning to sweep Portugal of which, *de jure* at least, they were not a colony but an integral province.

Then in the April of 1974 came the left-wing military coup that put an end to the old dictatorship. In order to avoid bloodshed and social violence, the coup leaders invited General António Spínola to head the new government. In the wake of the so-called *Revolucão da Flor* (Flower Revolution), three main political associations were formed in East Timor. The largest of these, the *União Democrática Timorense* or UDT, was made up of conservative elements socially and economically identified with the colonial régime. UDT supported General Spínola's scheme for a Portuguese-speaking federation of self-governing states. Next in importance was the more progressive *Associação Social Democrática Timorense* (ASDT), whose members, like the founders of UDT, were mainly graduates of the Jesuit seminary. But there were also a number of members with military backgrounds, men who had been influenced by the socialist ideas taught by Portuguese officers in Timor's military schools. A third party, the *Associação Popular Democrática Timorense* or APODETI actively advocated union with Indonesia and had only a very small following, including the tiny Moslem community. The opportunistic nature of Apodeti was evident from the career of its founder, Arnaldo dos Reis Araújo, whom the Portuguese had jailed for nine years in 1945 for collaboration with the Japanese. The three other small parties founded at this time, KOTA, the party of the tribal chiefs, the Chinese-dominated Association for the Democratic Union of East Timor and Australia, and the pro-Portugal *Partido Trabalhista*, barely got off the ground.

Indonesian Territorial Ambitions in East Timor

After his visit to Jakarta in June 1974, José Ramos Horta, one of the ASDT leaders, received from Indonesian foreign minister Adam Malik a letter stating that "the independence of every country is the right of every nation, with no exception for the people in Timor", and "whoever will govern in East Timor in the future after independence can be assured that the Government of Indonesia will always strive to maintain good relations". Indonesia at that time was very proud of its role as the champion of anti-colonialism in South East Asia. Therefore it warmly encouraged any efforts by East Timorese to banish the Portuguese from the region.

But unlike Adam Malik, the military establishment in Jakarta interpreted decolonization in East Timor as the integration of the territory with the rest of Indonesia. Needless to say, as in the case of Western New Guinea, which Indonesia took from Holland in 1963, any justification for such a solution could only be geographical: in race, language, culture and religion the East Timorese were manifestly non-Malay. In a bid to bridge this gulf, the Indonesian government flooded East Timor with pro-Apodeti and pro-Indonesian propaganda.

Australian Prime Minister Gough Whitlam's visit to Jakarta in the September of 1974 was to cause great alarm in East Timor. President Suharto complained to Mr. Whitlam that the granting of sovereignty to East Timor would stir up secessionist sentiments in West Irian, and to the delight of the Indonesian military Whitlam agreed that "an independent East Timor would be an unviable state and a potential threat to the area". And that same September General Spínola resigned, dashing all hopes for a Portuguese commonwealth, while the radicals in Lisbon clamoured for Portugal's immediate withdrawal from her so-called overseas provinces. In Timor the new governor, Mário Lemos Pires, set up a committee to supervise the process of decolonization. With the joint prospect of being abandoned by Portugal and then annexed by Moslem Indonesia, the two large Timorese parties hastily changed their programmes.

A Fatal Flirtation

UDT, diffident towards the new political climate in Portugal, now formally if half-heartedly supported the goal of independence. ASDT, more ideologically in tune with the new Lisbon régime, took a stronger anti-colonialist stance and renamed itself *Frente Revolucionária de Timor Leste Independente* "Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor", henceforth popularly known by the acronym FRETILIN. Ostensibly modelled on the Frelimo party of Mozambique, Fretilin nevertheless defined itself as a national liberation front drawing together a broad range of political viewpoints. The majority of its members were practising Catholics, but it now contained an active Marxist minority. The strange political complexion of Fretilin in its early days is best summed up by Bill Nicol in his book *Timor: The Stillborn Nation:*

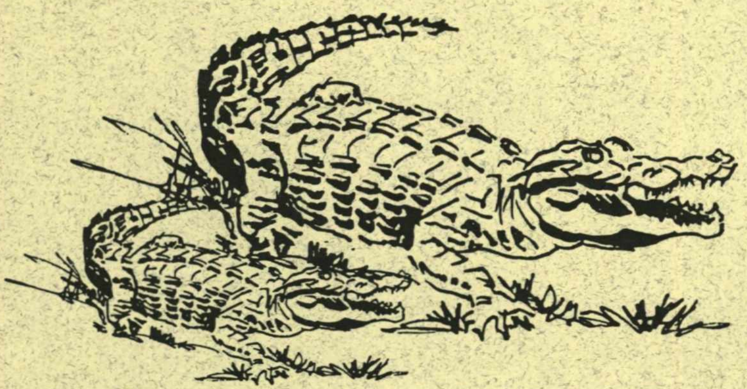
> "Catholics and Marxists make strange bedfellows. But, in Fretilin, bedfellows they were.
>
> Catholics dominated the upper echelons of the Fretilin hierarchy. Both the president, [Francisco] Xavier do Amaral, and the vice-president, Nicolau Lobato, trained in a Jesuit seminary in East Timor. Xavier [had also studied for the] priest[hood] in Macao. Both men became school teachers, although Xavier later changed jobs and became a customs official in Dili. In or out of the [seminary], Xavier and Lobato continued to be strong believers in both the Catholic Church and the image of God which that church sought to project.
>
> Below them, but still within the decision-making machinery, were the Marxists. Two of the most influential were Roque Rodrigues and António [Duarte] Carvarinho. They were from the extreme left of the Portuguese political spectrum and represented the most militant elements in Fretilin. Both held strong Marxist views, including a belief that religion was an opiate which kept the masses oblivious to their exploitation. They were outspoken in their condemnation of the role played by the Catholic Church in aiding and abetting Portuguese colonialism in East Timor.
>
> Although Xavier and Lobato were themselves critical of their church's colonial role, they remained sensitive to any more general criticism of the Roman faith. Indeed, both wanted to make an independent East Timor a Catholic nation.
>
> No Communists held executive positions in Fretilin. The party's large moderate Catholic majority saw to that. The communists were greatly outnumbered. There were no more than seven in the whole party, a mere handful compared with the 50 or 60 Catholics active in the Fretilin leadership. Nevertheless, the communists did play an important part." (pp. 94, 102)

Fretilin may have begun as a broad patriotic front whose middle-aged Catholic leaders differed from the members of UDT only in their rather more progressive outlook and commitment to reform. But being pragmatists with little interest in ideology, they allowed themselves to be influenced by the Marxist minority within the party. Or more exactly, by Rodrigues and Carvarinho, who were 24 and 23 years of age respectively, and had just emerged from Lisbon's radical student milieu. Rodrigues, moreover, had done his military service in Mozambique, where he had fraternized with Frelimo guerrillas and embraced their Maoist philosophy.

The Fretilin leadership's imprudent indulgence of these two immature radicals was to prove fatal. For Xavier and Lobato naïvely allowed Rodrigues and Carvarinho to impose on their party a whole range of Marxist trappings that obscured the basically democratic principles of Fretilin: such things as revolutionary rhetoric, the Communist clenched-fist salute, the labelling of all anti-Fretilin Timorese as 'traitors', painted slogans reading *morte aos traidores* ('death to traitors') and *independência ou morte* ('independence or death'), the adoption of the title 'comrade', and combining Frelimo-style uniforms with an unkempt appearance. At the time the initially reluctant Fretilin leadership probably thought that this aggressive approach might shock a conservative population into political activism. Once the people had been won over to the cause, the Marxistic facade could then be cast off, and a genuinely Timorese solution to the nation's problems could be sought with full respect for local tradition.

In fairness to Fretilin it must be said that in the Portugal of 1974 little in the realm of social or political progress could be expected from the now stultified right, and some sort of left-turn seemed a prerequisite for the achievement of self-determination. On balance, Fretilin was probably no more radical in its aims than the independence parties of Indonesia or Papua on the eve of their emancipation from colonial rule. Nor should it be forgotten that one is dealing with a hurriedly improvised independence movement in a third-world colony with no experience of truly representative government and in a state of emergency.

Nevertheless, at a time when South Vietnam and Cambodia had been overrun by Communist forces offering the peoples they 'liberated' at best the option of 're-education' or extermination, Fretilin's flirtation with Marxism was an enormous tactical blunder. It understandably invited the hostility of UDT and of the Church, including the Portuguese Bishop of Díli, Dom José Joaquim Ribeiro, and the Jesuits of the Dare seminary: according to official Papal teaching Catholics could not actively co-operate in any manner or for whatever reason with Communism. But much more importantly, it was fuel to the fire of Indonesia's anti-Communist paranoia and the perfect excuse for the aggressively expansionist republic to intervene in East Timor. It will be remembered that Indonesia's President Suharto had come to power in 1965 as a result of a bloody purge of left-wing elements in the Sukarno government, and many thousands of innocent Indonesians and Chinese had been murdered in army-conducted anti-Communist pogroms. Since that time all opponents to Suharto's authoritarian régime were automatically labelled 'Communists'.



Indonesia Plans an Invasion

Immediately after the Whitlam visit in September, Indonesian state radio began branding UDT as 'Fascist' and Fretilin as 'Communist', and urged Indonesians to "assist the struggle of Apodeti". Propaganda broadcasts in Tetum and other local dialects were beamed daily into the Portuguese territory from West Timor. Apodeti members were invited to Indonesia for military training in preparation for an eventual invasion. Then, in early December, Foreign Minister Malik dispelled any remaining doubts about Indonesia's intentions by announcing that independence was not an option for East Timor.

In January 1975 UDT and Fretilin united in a coalition to press for independence, a sufficient indication of the Timorese conservatives' belief at this stage that the rival party was basically Catholic and that its Marxist elements could be contained. Predictably, Indonesia stepped up its propaganda, accusing the coalition of anti-Indonesian activities in connivance with foreign powers and alleging that they had inaugurated a "reign of terror" in Díli. As the invasion plans progressed, a new road was built linking Kupang, the capital of West Timor, with the border.

Having realized that Apodeti was a lost cause, the Indonesian government decided on a new 'divide and conquer' approach, and the following April it separately invited representatives of the two pro-independence parties to Jakarta. The whole subversion campaign was given the code-name *Operasi Komodo* and was the brain-child of General Ali Murtopo. Suharto's government played on the UDT leaders' fear of Communism, feeding their resentment of Portugal's two military advisers in Timor, Majors Francisco Mota and Costa Jonatás, who had apparently been encouraging the radical wing of Fretilin. At this time UDT president Francisco Lopes da Cruz actually went over to the Indonesian side, and when his duplicity was discovered, his colleagues distanced themselves from him. On their return to Díli, the UDT delegation announced their party's withdrawal from the coalition and began openly denouncing Fretilin as a 'Communist movement'. But in the meantime UDT was rapidly losing the support of the poor rural population, most of whom were now siding with Fretilin, whose activists had begun conducting successful literacy and health schemes in the villages. The more progressive nationalist party, favouring self-reliance, had announced economic and agrarian reforms that would lead to a more equitable distribution of wealth through the co-operative system. By contrast, the more privileged elements in UDT insisted on the maintenance of the colonial economy.

The Civil War and FRETILIN's victory

Finally, responding to Indonesia's threat to intervene militarily if Fretilin gained power, the new UDT leader João Carrascalão launched on 11 August a coup against Fretilin. A bitter civil war ensued, and since the local Timorese militia was mainly pro-Fretilin, Portugal was obliged to send a peace-keeping force to the territory. At the end of the month, Governor Lemos Pires withdrew with his staff to the offshore island of Ataúro, and ignored requests from the Fretilin leadership to return and help direct the process of decolonization over a period of five years. Among the several thousand East Timorese who fled across the border during the hostilities were prominent UDT supporters, some of whom were denied food and aid by the Indonesian authorities until they signed petitions for Indonesia's annexation of their homeland.

About 1,500 Timorese, mainly activists in the warring parties, had perished when the civil war came to an end in September. Fretilin emerged as the victor and established a provisional government, the flag of the now departed Portuguese being flown in the meantime. After the cessation of hostilities, Fretilin impressed foreign visitors with their good sense and moderation in the restoration of civil order. The exclusion of Communist elements from the decision-making process served to rally the bulk of the population. Nevertheless, accusations of formal Marxism continued in the international press, and Fretilin invited Australian and Indonesian delegations to visit Díli on a fact-finding mission. The invitations were ignored. James Dunn commented that at the time

> "[Fretilin's] administrative structure had obvious shortcomings, but it clearly enjoyed widespread support from the population, including many hitherto UDT supporters. In October, Australian relief workers visited most parts of the colony, and, without exception, they reported that there was no evidence of hostility towards Fretilin. Indeed, the leaders of the victorious party were welcomed warmly and spontaneously in all main centres by crowds of Timorese. In my long association with the territory, I had never witnessed such demonstrations of spontaneous warmth and support from the indigenous population." (TPB, p. 29)

While there is little likelihood that Indonesia really considered Fretilin a full-blown Marxist movement, the Jakarta government certainly feared the pro-Communist influence that left-wing elements in Australia supporting Fretilin might exercise in an independent East Timor. In September West Timor was closed to foreign journalists. By October the success of the Fretilin government had provoked the Indonesians into making bombing raids on the villages on the East Timorese side of the border. During these incursions five Australian journalists were murdered at Balibo by Indonesian troops. Although the Whitlam government had full knowledge of the killings, it declined to make any protest for fear of harming relations with Indonesia. Then, with the fall of the strategic village of Atabae to Indonesian forces the following month, Fretilin hastily declared the Democratic Republic of East Timor on 29 November 1975. Three members of the new government left for New York on a mission to seek the protection of the United Nations and the United States. But the next day the remnants of UDT and Apodeti proclaimed the integration of East Timor with Indonesia, and Indonesia has ever since claimed this statement by national renegades as an act of self-determination by the East Timorese people.

The Bloodbath

The invasion of tiny East Timor by Indonesia, a nation of 150 million, began on 7 December 1975. It was carried out with the blessing of the United States, which was Indonesia's main supplier of arms at the time. The appearance of Indonesian battleships, bombers, paratroopers and marines plunged the whole country into a horrendous bloodbath in which civilians suffered no less than nationalist troops. The next day was the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, the patronal feast of the diocese and a national holiday in East Timor. As a prelude to their so-called liberation of the province, the Indonesians broadcast the following message over Radio Dîli:

> "We come not to kill you but to give you freedom from the Fretilin communist clutches. Come to us. Don't be afraid. Otherwise you will be killed".

And killed they were. Although the Indonesians announced themselves as a liberation and peacekeeping force, their mainly Javanese troops had been briefed for all-out war. It has been reliably reported that the more educated soldiers were instructed beforehand that the East Timorese people were all Communists and had to be treated like the Indonesian Communists annihilated in 1965, while the more ignorant Moslem troops were prepared for a *jihad* or holy war against an inferior Christian breed. The more infidels destroyed, the greater a soldier's merit in heaven. Unless Indonesian servicemen are to be dismissed as utter barbarians, only this indoctrination can explain the complete abandon with which they conducted themselves in East Timor.

About 90% of the population with whom the Indonesians came into contact in the initial and bloodiest phase of the invasion were Catholics. Anyone who has the stomach to read the full account of the Indonesian atrocities can peruse Amnesty International's official report, but it will suffice here to mention some typical incidents and subjugation techniques. In the first days of the invasion twenty-seven Dîli women, some of them clutching children, were lined up on the wharf. The Dîli wharf was directly opposite the bishop's residence. The Indonesians tore the crying children from their mothers and passed them back to the crowd, who were forced to count aloud as the women were shot one by one.

In the mountains whole families and communities were put to death on reports that they had given food to Fretilin soldiers. When the Indonesians took the Fretilin-held villages of Remexio and Aileu, the entire populations, except children under the age of four, were shot because they were "infected with the seeds of Fretilin". The spared infants were bundled aboard lorries and then shipped to Java, where the wife of President Suharto and the charitable ladies of Jakarta set up an orphanage for the little victims of Fretilin terror. The little victims, never repatriated, were brought up as Moslems.

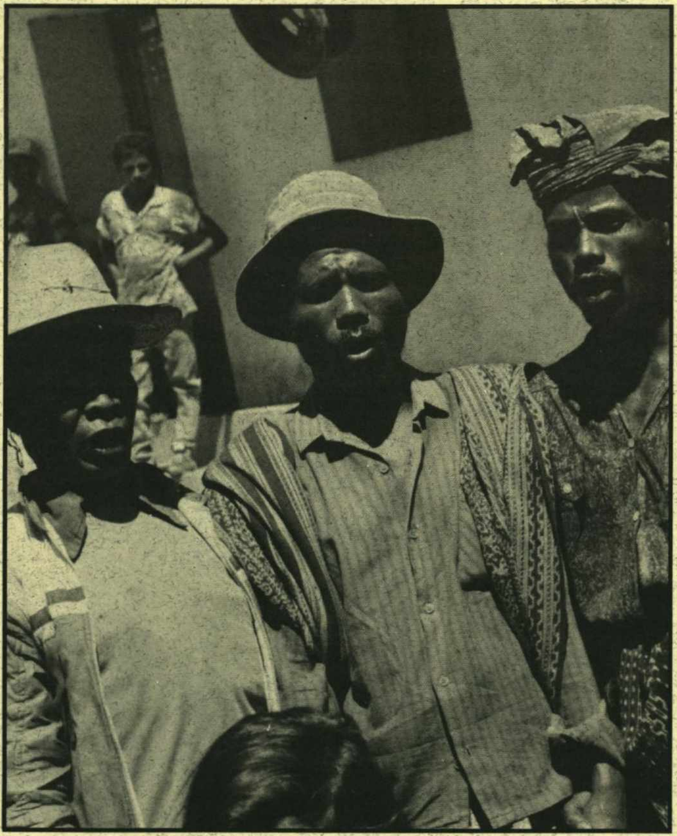
A large group of women arbitrarily locked up in a Dîli warehouse were kept naked all the time, and when they were finally released, nearly all of them were pregnant to their Indonesian guards. On 28 May 1976 sixty-seven young men were shot in the southern town of Suai for protesting to the Indonesian commander about the rape of their sisters and fiancées. At the Ermera concentration camp, four men and two pregnant women were burnt alive between 8 and 9 October, 1976. The island of Ataúro, where political offenders were confined in huge numbers, reportedly became one big torture-chamber. In Dîli the national poet Francisco Borja da Costa was tortured, mutilated and shot by Indonesian soldiers. Timorese Chinese, immediately suspected of Maoist subversion by the invaders, suffered particularly severely. During that bloody December eight out of every ten Chinese male inhabitants of Dîli were slaughtered.

In East Timor the Javanese soldiery developed a number of favourite methods for pacifying the local 'communists' and 'infidels'. Men and boys were dealt with by being tormented with cigarettes and razor blades and having their genitals burnt away with alcohol and candlelight. Men found guilty of aiding the resistance fighters often had their faces smashed with bricks before being shot, their corpses being publicly burned with wood which their assembled relatives and friends were forced to collect. There were cases of men being dropped alive out of helicopters, villagers tied up and crushed by tanks, and Timorese being forced at gunpoint to commit atrocities against their own people. Married women, before being raped and shot, were made to witness the torture of their husbands; the more attractive the woman, the more likely she was to meet this fate. In the Builico district, young girls, after being subjected to orgies of pack rape, were taken to a well-known precipice, stabbed and thrown down while still alive. Captured Fretilin supporters including boys were commonly impaled and left to die in the sun, while snapshots taken by Indonesian soldiers on active service in Timor show them proudly displaying war trophies: the severed heads of freedom-fighters.

Whenever reprisals were taken against a village, the local church was invariably desecrated and burned. Killings frequently took place in or outside churches, and it was standard procedure to use the churches as prisons to hold condemned villagers before their execution. One of the Catholic priests of Dîli estimated that over 2,000 of the 10,000 inhabitants had been slaughtered during the first few days of the invasion, adding that the Indonesian excesses were far worse than those of the Japanese occupation. After each day of killing, the Indonesian soldiers would round up Timorese girls and take them aboard the battleships in Dîli harbour to help them celebrate their victory. Looting of churches, public buildings and private houses was rife all over the province, and ships were provided for the Indonesian soldiers to send home their spoils.

The Church Defends the Maubere

When senior Church officials begged Colonel Kalbuadi Dading to enforce some discipline among his troops and stop the indiscriminate killings, they were contemptuously told: "This is war, and people get killed in wars". Nor was there any action on the part of General Benny Murdani, the overseer of the whole invasion, a practising Catholic and a friend of the Papal Nuncio in Jakarta. Though an outspoken opponent of Fretilin, Bishop Ribeiro sent in early 1976 a strong letter of protest to the Indonesian government, saying in relation to Fretilin that "your Indonesian troops with their murdering, looting and raping are one thousand times worse". Referring to the slaughter that he had witnessed in Dîli, Mgr. Ribeiro recalled how the Indonesian paratroopers "had floated down from the heavens like angels and then behaved like demons".



Unfortunately, because of their earlier flirtation with aspects of Marxism, Fretilin had incurred the hostility of conservatives throughout the world, including many Catholics. Right-wing groups who supported the anti-Communist stance of the Suharto régime were therefore disposed to believe its claim that the number of casualties in East Timor — placed as high as 100,000 by Fretilin supporters — had been wildly exaggerated. On 30 March 1977 Foreign Minister Malik proved the sceptics wrong when he admitted to foreign newsmen: "Fifty thousand people or perhaps eighty thousand might have been killed during the war in Timor". But, he added, "It was war. . . Then what is the big fuss?" Moreover, the Indonesian Catholic delegation who had visited the conquered territory in September 1976 had noted that:

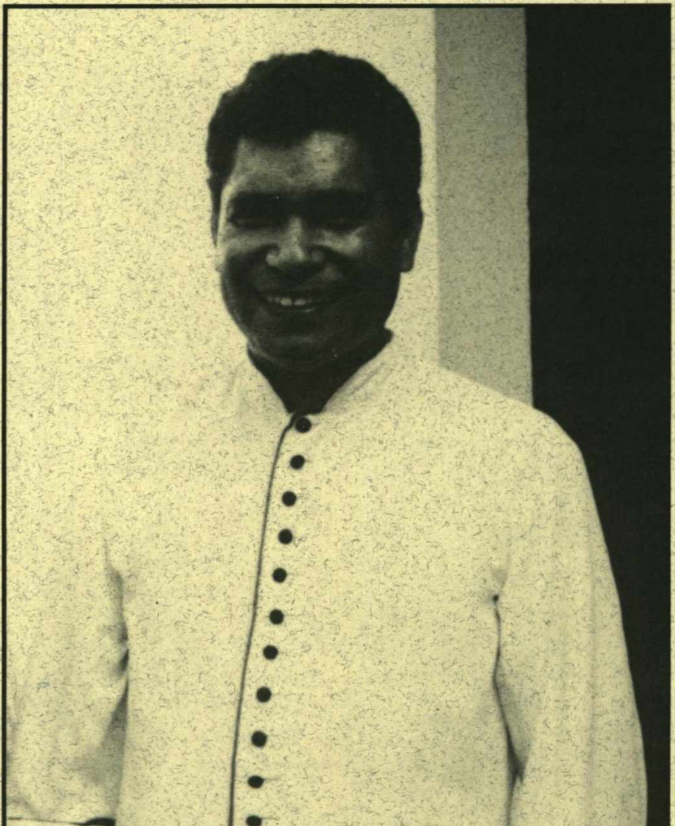
> "According to reports, sixty thousand people had been killed during the war. We found this figure rather high, because it means ten per cent of the total population of East Timor. But when asked, two priests in Dili replied that, according to their estimate, the figure of people killed may reach one hundred thousand". (AGIIET, p. 70)

Throughout this nightmare the Timorese people turned to Catholic priests and nuns for solace and support against the invader. The clergy, in turn, forgot their earlier antagonism towards Fretilin and came to see them as the only champions of the Maubere. Several priests risked their lives travelling to Fretilin-held areas to administer the sacraments to the guerillas and their families. In November 1977, two nuns were allowed to leave Timor for Portugal, and they took with them a letter from one of these priests to his superiors. In it the priest chronicled the events he had witnessed:

> "[T]he war. . . goes on with the same initial fury. Fretilin goes on fighting despite famine, sickness, death and the crisis in the leadership that happened in the last couple of months. The invaders have intensified their attacks in the three classic ways, by land, sea and air. From 7 December till February 1976 there were anchored in Dili harbour twenty-three warships which bombarded the hills around Dili twenty-four hours a day. The helicopters — eight to twelve — and the warplanes — four of them — were flying all over Timor. Inland there are countless tanks and armoured cars. The Indonesian troops in Timor might now be fifty thousand. [. . .] From last December the war was intensified. The war planes don't stop all day long. There are hundreds of human beings dying daily. The bodies are food for the vultures. If bullets don't kill us we die from epidemic diseases, villages completely destroyed.
>
> The war is entering its third year and it seems it won't stop soon. The barbarities (understandable in the Stone Age), the cruelties, the thefts, the firing squads without any justification, are now part of everyday life in Timor. The insecurity is total and the terror of being arrested is our daily bread. (I'm on the list of *personae non gratae*; any day they might make me disappear).
>
> Fretilin troops who surrender are shot dead. For them there are no jails. The genocide will be soon. . . The tragedy is that the world ignores us. We are on the way to genocide. . ." (AGIIET, pp. 72–3).

In October 1977 another Catholic priest managed to have smuggled out of Timor a letter which found its way to the East Timor Association in Melbourne. "In East Timor", wrote this missionary,

> ". . .the violence of these 'friends', the Indonesians, continues to intensify, with all sorts of dire consequences. A barbarous genocide of innocent people goes on, apparently with complete peace of conscience. . . . East Timor is being wiped out by an invasion, a brutal conquest that produces numberless corpses, maimed men and women and orphaned children. Consciences are kept at peace by claiming. . . that the people of Timor are 'communists'. . . Even if they were communists, they would have a right to live. . . That is why I ask you to pray a lot. There are many attacks and many dead. Of course, many die on the Indonesian side also. . . and so do not forget these people; pray also for the people of Indonesia. It is very sad to see the lack of concern of the Indonesians here, given the heavy responsibility that falls on them. We will have a new bishop soon in Timor. The present one cannot take it any more. He is tired. He sees everything reduced to ashes; all the values are shattered, and Christian family life is destroyed. . . Pray, pray hard for the Timorese" (AGIIET, p. 72).



Bishop Belo, Bishop of Dili and Apostolic Administrator

Genocide in Indonesia's 'Twenty-Seventh Province'

Within six months of the invasion practically the entire leadership of Fretilin had been captured and killed. The corpse of Nicolau Lobato was flown to Jakarta and displayed on national television. Despite the fact that on 12 December 1975 the General Assembly of the United Nations had called on Indonesia to withdraw from East Timor, the territory was proclaimed Indonesia's 'twenty-seventh province' on 17 July 1976, and a new puppet administration formed with Timorese renegades was headed by former UDT leader Lopes da Cruz and KOTA chief José Martins. Most of the member states of the United Nations have ever since regarded the Indonesian annexation of East Timor as illegal. The exceptions have been mainly Moslem countries, though the first foreign power to recognize Indonesian claims (on 20 January 1978) was the Australian Liberal government of Malcolm Fraser. This decision was taken by Canberra only months after James Dunn had presented to the government his detailed dossier on the Indonesian atrocities in East Timor. On 3 December that year Australian authorities ordered the destruction of Fretilin's last radio link with Darwin, thus plunging the occupied territory into complete isolation.

As a result of the first massacres in Dīli and the other towns, most of the surviving population, accompanied by their priests, fled into the mountainous interior still held by Fretilin forces. Within two years, however, food supplies were exhausted, and starving people streamed back down to the lowlands. On surrendering to Indonesian troops they were placed in so-called resettlement camps. Church sources state that the shortage of food and medical supplies and aid was, through deliberate Indonesian negligence, so acute that the compounds were little more than death camps. All foreigners, including relief missions, were barred from entering the territory, and most food and other supplies sent to East Timor by the Red Cross and other charitable organizations abroad ended up in the hands of the Indonesian troops, who consumed them or sold them in shops. Photos smuggled out of Timor at this time show that the famine experienced there was as severe as that of Biafra. As for the destruction of families, in 1978 the Governor of East Timor reported that the war had left 20,000 orphans and 11,000 abandoned children.

By 1980 the number of East Timorese who had died from execution or starvation since December 1975 was well over 150,000. Official statistics speak for themselves. According to the last census conducted by the Catholic Church in 1974, the population of East Timor was approximately 680,000. In 1980 the Indonesian census counted only 555,350 persons in the territory, a staggering decrease of some 125,000. While admitting that many civilians, especially women and children, perished during the 'pacification' between 1975 and 1976, Indonesia has made the unsupported claim that the earlier Church census was inaccurate and that the population of East Timor in 1975 was far below 600,000. They have also exaggerated the extent of the exodus of refugees into West Timor and abroad. But when one takes into account that the first Indonesian census included Indonesian troops and personnel numbering over 40,000, and given the unceasing killings that have taken place since 1980, Timorese claims of having now lost a third of their population begin to ring true. In any case, even the lowest Indonesian figure, that of 50,000 Timorese deaths by 1977 would be a truly shocking record.

A Church of Solidarity

When a heartbroken Bishop Ribeiro returned to Portugal in 1977, his place was taken by Timorese Mgr. Martinho da Costa Lopes. Though a bishop, the new head of the local Church was named only Apostolic Administrator by the Vatican. By excluding him from the Indonesian Episcopal Conference and making him directly responsible to the Holy See, the Vatican was able to support East Timor's claim to self-determination. The Catholic Church thus became the freest institution in East Timor, and a natural rallying point for the population. Mgr. da Costa Lopes proved to be a courageous defender of his flock, and his constant protests to the Indonesian authorities made him a target for official slander and intimidation. As for the thousand or so freedom fighters in the mountains among the Acting Bishop's flock, Dom Martinho was well aware of the baselessness of charges that they were Communists. He would later state in a 1983 interview that "Fretilin is the only group fighting for the people, and that earns it the sympathy of the whole population".

In 1981 Bishop da Costa Lopes protested vehemently to President Suharto after 'Operation Security'. In the April of that year, all business and schools in the province had been closed for several days, and 50,000 men and boys were conscripted to march in groups of twelve in front of Indonesian troops into Fretilin-held areas. This strategy, nicknamed 'the fence of legs', prevented the guerillas from attacking the Indonesians, and numerous atrocities were then committed against the women and children found in the Fretilin villages. The traumatized conscripts reported to Dom Martinho such horrific scenes as pregnant women being cut open, and babies being seized by the feet and smashed against trees and rocks. Suharto was infuriated by the episcopal intervention and veiled threats were made to the Vatican. Diplomatic tension eventually culminated in the forced resignation of Mgr da Costa Lopes the following year. During the ensuing crackdown on Catholic opposition to the occupation, over 600 people simply disappeared between August and December in Dīli alone, and even though their distressed families were informed that they had been sent to Bali, they were never seen again.

It must be admitted that since the annexation of East Timor, Indonesia has poured a good deal of money into the province, improving agriculture, industry, roads, communications and educational and medical facilities. Since the introduction of Indonesian public education the illiteracy rate has fallen from 92% in 1975 to 20%. But nationalist hardliners object that these improvements have been made in the interests of the Indonesian army and colonists, and it is certainly true that for the ordinary people these material benefits are meagre compensation for the terror of the invasion period and the police-state atmosphere in which they have to live. Even the present Governor of East Timor, UDT founder Mário Viegas Carrascalão, admitted in early 1991 during discussions with a visiting Australian parliamentarian, Mr. Garrie Gibson, that "his efforts to rebuild the economic and social fabric of East Timor were constantly undermined by the brutal repression of the Indonesian military" (OU, p. 38).

Frustrated by the failure of 'Operation Smile', a new conquest of hearts policy, the dreaded Indonesian secret police (INTEL) soon reverted to their terrorist tactics. There were of course no brakes on their activities in a province which remained closed to foreigners until 1989. Church missionary bulletins confirm a recrudescence of the harassment of East Timorese civilians in the late 1980s. According to these reports the army was particularly adept at exploiting women to weaken the nationalist resolve of the men in pro-Fretilin areas. One exiled parish priest spoke of soldiers entering houses at night-time and asking to see particular women not even connected with Fretilin who would then be taken away in jeeps and hours later returned to their families severely beaten. Usually no reason was given for this arbitrary abuse. Women whose husbands were in the local prison for pro-independence activities would be forced into compromising or obscene poses with other men and photographed. The photographs would then be sent to their imprisoned husbands as a form of psychological torture. Families of individuals who had disappeared sometimes received unsigned demands for ransoms which they had no hope of paying. And it was quite common for priests who dared to protest against such outrages to be beaten and tortured in the course of long and gruelling interrogations.

A Miracle of Grace

The blood of martyrs may be the seed of Christians, but it is equally true that the work of evangelization progresses best wherever the Church identifies itself with the just aspirations and, especially, the sufferings of individual peoples. One need only compare the relative success of the 'Church of solidarity' in Ireland, Poland or the Western Ukraine with its relative failure in countries like Austria, Hungary and Bohemia where it aligned itself with a pseudo-Catholic and oppressive secular power. In Timor the Catholic Church had made so little headway before 1950 because of its identification with an alien power that cared little for the vital interests of the people. In 1975 still only 30% of the population was baptized, but under the leadership of Mgr. da Costa Lopes and of his young Salesian successor, Mgr. Carlos Filipe Ximenes Belo, at least 90% of the native population were outwardly practising the Catholic faith by 1990. Admittedly this seemingly miraculous trebling of conversions was partly in response to the Indonesians' habit of branding as a Communist and social enemy anyone who did not profess one of the five religions recognized by the state. But the high rate of church attendance in the new Christian districts suggests a serious and sincere commitment.

That these mass conversions have not been merely political acts in a heady climate of liberation theology is also indicated by the unusually conservative nature of the East Timorese Church. There is no similarity between the diocese of Díli, remarkable for its orthodoxy of belief and practice, and the radical base communities of the Philippines or Latin America. Even today, for a priest to make any impact on Maubere society he must be seen to devote himself primarily to his sacred functions and carefully avoid cultivating the modern secular image that now tends to characterize the Catholic clergy elsewhere (ETII, pp.32–3). Consequently in East Timor priests and nuns wear full religious dress, the traditional catechism is taught, people are trained to behave reverently in church, and such innovations as Communion in the hand, lay ministers of the Eucharist and general absolutions are unknown and unwanted. Not only do the clergy set high standards, but the average Timorese knows that the only institution really concerned for his physical, moral and spiritual welfare and the champion of his rights is the Catholic Church, the focus of national identity. (This is also a church which today cares for 40,000 orphans). When the pilgrim statue of Our Lady of Fatima toured the province in the Holy Year 1983, there was enormous popular response, and the rate of conversions peaked. Yet the diocese of Díli with its 23 parishes today is still desperately short of priests: in 1991 there were 50 of them: only 6 more than in 1974 when the Catholic population was much smaller. Similarly the number of nuns in the diocese has fallen from 49 to 45. There are, however, 1,011 catechists active in the diocese at present, as opposed to the 37 assisting the clergy before the invasion.

The 'Christian Problem' in *Timor Timur*

Although the secular-minded Indonesian government is motivated by political pragmatism rather than by religious prejudice (— most Indonesians outside Java are only nominal Moslems —), it has watched with dismay the progressive christianization of East Timor where the Catholic faith and Maubere nationalism now go hand in hand. The government has therefore not hesitated to exploit the Islamic fundamentalism it officially condemns to suit its ends. The harsh treatment of the East Timorese by Indonesia must be measured against the high proportion of practising Javanese Moslems in the 445,000-strong Indonesian armed forces (ABRI) and the enormous influence of the military hierarchy on government policy. Throughout the province Catholic religious services are conducted under strict military surveillance, and soldiers armed with machine-guns standing at the back of churches are a common sight. Army attacks on the faithful at Catholic gatherings, such as the beatings of worshippers during the Golden Anniversary Mass in Díli on 4 September 1990, have become frequent occurrences.

Besides menacing behaviour and outbursts of violence from an exasperated army of occupation, the government has tried to deal with the Christian problem in its rebellious 27th province through more peaceful means, for example 'transmigration': encouraging Moslem Indonesians to settle in the territory, and erecting mosques at the taxpayers' expense wherever a new Catholic church or chapel is built. Today 10% of the population of *Timor Timur* (some 100,000) and 20% of the inhabitants of Díli are Indonesian Moslems, who control business and administration and form the new social élite in the province. Bishop Belo has deplored how "They come off every boat. In ten years Díli will cease to be a Timorese town, if things go on as they are". Non-Timorese 'transmigrants' receive preferential treatment in government offices and hospitals, while the discrimination suffered by the native Timorese discourages most from trying to take advantage of the existing social services and applying for the better jobs. Governor Carrascalão himself has complained to foreign visitors that there is little hope of employment at home for graduates of the province's higher education institutions.

Indonesia has also severely restricted the entry of foreign missionaries into the country. Most of the teachers in the schools attended by Catholic children are Moslem Indonesians, and the only permitted language of instruction is Bahasa Indonesia. All schoolchildren are indoctrinated in the five principles of Indonesian nationalism *(Panca Sila)*, and in society generally even the speaking of Portuguese by those who remember it is strongly discouraged, sometimes with threats of punishment. There is, however, strong passive resistance to these policies, and indeed attempts to seduce the semi-Catholic rural Timorese into the Islamic fold have been largely doomed to failure. Missionaries relate that when the typical tribesman is told by the Indonesians that as a Moslem he will be allowed to take several wives, he shows some initial interest. But when his proselytizer goes on to explain that Moslems are forbidden to eat pork, the favourite fare of the Maubere, the pagan Timorese sends him on his way!

The Church has reacted to Indonesianization by teaching Portuguese in after-school classes, and has retained Portuguese as the official language of the Church. When, in 1981, the government tried to force the diocese to replace Portuguese with Indonesian in church services, Mgr. da Costa Lopes obtained permission from Rome for the liturgical use of Tetum. In 1985 the Council of Priests complained that "an attempt to Indonesianize the Timorese people. . . means the gradual murder of Timorese culture. To kill the culture is to kill the people". The people, for their part, have reacted to Indonesianization not only by deepening their Catholic faith, but by having large families averaging ten children. In so doing their double aim is to hinder transmigration, and to make up for the population losses of the 1970s and early 1980s. (The illegal annexation of East Timor has been disastrous in human terms for Indonesia as well: according to some estimates as many as 20,000 Indonesian soldiers have been killed in active service in the province since 1975 — ET, p. 6).

A Lonely Struggle

Today there is a small minority of mainly Indonesian priests who collaborate with the authorities, and until the tragic events of last November Dom Carlos Belo and the majority of the clergy loyal to him often criticized what they saw as Rome's vacillating attitude to the plight of the Maubere. In July 1981 the Catholic clergy of East Timor issued the following statement:

> "We do not understand why the Indonesian Church and the universal Roman Church have up till now not stated openly and officially their solidarity with the Church, people and religious of East Timor. Perhaps this was the heaviest blow for us. . . We felt stunned by this silence that seemed to allow us to die deserted". (*Comment* 1985, p. 13)

To their credit, the Catholic bishops of Indonesia overcame their initial hesitation to speak out, and at considerable risk to themselves condemned the atrocities and violation of human rights in East Timor in a statement of 1983.

The Vatican, however, appeared less sympathetic. In March 1989 Bishop Belo petitioned the Secretary General of the United Nations for a self-determination referendum in East Timor. The pro-nuncio in Jakarta, Archbishop Francesco Canalini, immediately repudiated the letter, saying that the Vatican could not agree with its contents. And this in spite of the fact that the Indonesian Primate, Archbishop Soekoto, was publicly supporting the aims of Mgr. Belo. The Timorese clergy also had mixed feelings about Pope John Paul II's October 1989 visit to Dĩli in the context of his Indonesian tour, an act that could be — and was — interpreted as acceptance of Indonesia's annexation of East Timor. An earlier statement by a Vatican spokesman to the effect that the Holy See's relations with Indonesia could not be jeopardized for the sake of a few hundred thousand Catholics in Timor did little to reassure the people.

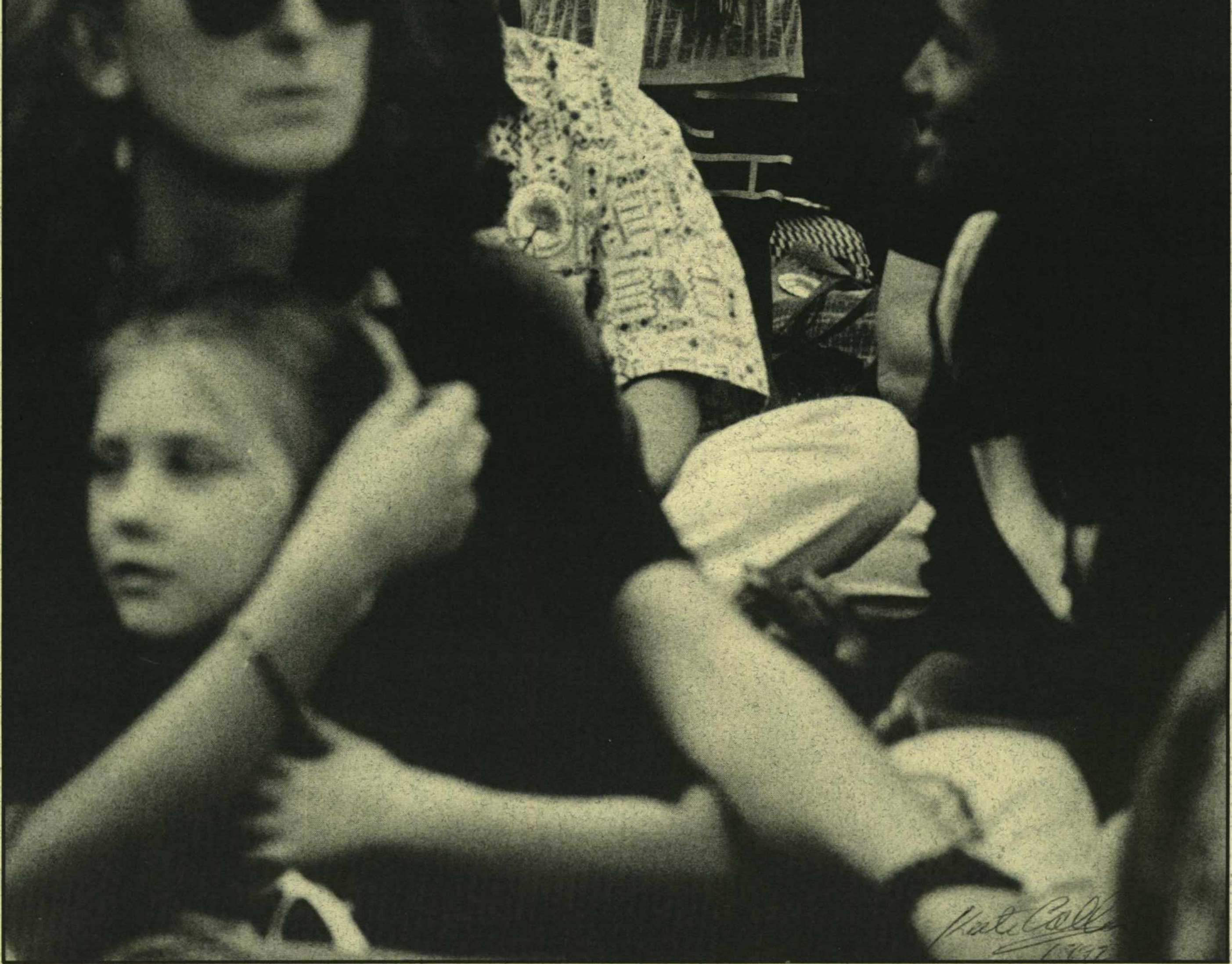
At the outdoor Papal Mass the principal decorations were giant posters of President Suharto and the Pope side by side, while the Timorese worshippers held up crucifixes and photographs of their murdered or vanished loved ones. The Pope's compliance with the Indonesian demand that he address the congregation in English rather than in Portuguese, which he knows, also drew unfavourable comment. But when, in the course of his address, the Pope called on the Timorese to reconcile themselves with their rulers, the disappointment erupted into a pro-independence demonstration immediately answered by brutal beatings by plainclothes police planted among the worshippers. The Holy Father was obviously in a very delicate position, but his actions, or rather lack of action, seemed in stark contrast with his administrative policy in regard to the diocese of Dĩli.

After this public manifestation of discontent with Indonesian rule, there was a marked increase military crimes against the civilian population. British journalist Hugh O'Shaughnessy reported after a tour of East Timor in March 1991 that the torture with razor blades used during the original invasion had recently come back into vogue with the Javanese soldiers. Mr. O'Shaughnessy was also informed by a priest of the diocese how one of his parishioners, a girl of seventeen, had been arrested, pack-raped and tortured by the local garrison. When her distraught relatives found her body, her breasts and genitals had been cut off and stuffed into her mouth.

The Santa Cruz Massacre

The most recent anti-Catholic outrage, the Santa Cruz massacre of 12 November last year, has led not only Rome but the whole world to reassess the situation in East Timor. Since Indonesia's illegal occupation of Portugal's former colony in 1975 and the 1983 United Nations resolution for a settlement of the East Timorese question, Lisbon had been negotiating with Jakarta to allow a Portuguese parliamentary delegation to visit occupied East Timor. These negotiations had dragged on until September 1991, when Indonesia finally agreed to admit the proposed Portuguese delegation the following November. However, on 21 October, Bishop Belo reported on Portuguese radio that in the lead-up to the visit the Timorese people were being subjected to threats of dire reprisals by the Indonesian army. The aim of this intimidation campaign was obviously to prevent the Maubere from publicly voicing grievances with Indonesian military rule and their aspirations to self-determination. Clare Dixon, an English Catholic aid worker, was in East Timor at the time and recalled how

> "On a visit to a provincial town, I received a message from a community of sisters with whom I was to spend the night. They begged me not to go to their convent or try to make contact with them as they were too frightened of reprisals from the military if they were seen talking to a foreigner. The priests there told me that 'their graves were ready' if they tried to make contact with the Portuguese delegation" (*Timor Link*, Feb. 1992, p. 8).



Sydney Morning Herald

Kirsty Sword, an Australian researcher on East Timor, similarly reported in September an incident in the mountain village of Nahareka near Viqueque where Indonesian Battalion 406 had actually threatened to kill every Timorese aged between ten and forty-five if they made any 'trouble' during the visit. Alarmed by such developments and discouraged by the other difficulties Jakarta was placing in the way of the delegation, Portugal called off the visit on 24 October. The Indonesian army, for its part, announced the end of 'Operation Smile' and the inauguration of 'Operation Combat'.

Mgr. Belo's worst fears were confirmed on 28 October, when Indonesian police stormed the Motael parish church in Dîli and shot dead two young Timorese patriots who had taken sanctuary there. Then, on 12 November, after a memorial Mass for one of the victims, Sebastião Gomes Rangel, the military opened fire on a crowd of several thousand worshippers at Santa Cruz cemetery and gunned down over 100 men, women and children. Another 200 or so were wounded. The victims were immediately buried by the soldiers in an unmarked common grave. After the massacre Dom Carlos sheltered 257 Timorese students in his house. He also risked his life personally accompanying the more frightened ones back to their homes.

An additional 5,000 Indonesian troops were rushed to East Timor to back up the force of 25,000 already stationed there to 'keep order'. Further outbreaks of military violence against civilians quickly followed all over the province, and hundreds of Maubere were arrested and 'interrogated'. Three days after the massacre eighty young inhabitants of Be-Mussi who had been present at Santa Cruz cemetery were rounded up and shot by Indonesian soldiers. The female victims were raped in front of the men, then stripped naked and blindfolded for execution. On 17 November the militia returned to Be-Mussi and shot ten witnesses to this killing, and among the seven more villagers murdered two days later were two children, aged one and five. East Timorese youth studying at various Indonesian universities were subjected to surveillance, detention and torture, and the Indonesian Episcopal Conference set the figure of Maubere civilians who 'disappeared' after 12 November as high as ninety. For weeks the inhabitants of Dîli were terrorized at night by violent street gangs made up of off-duty Indonesian soldiers.

Thirteen survivors of the Santa Cruz massacre were detained to be tried for subversion, a charge that normally brings the death penalty in Indonesia. General Try Sutrisno, head of the Indonesian armed forces, was unrepentant when news of the killings provoked international outrage. Only nineteen people had died, he claimed, and he accused the Catholic Church of having provoked the incident. "These despicable people must be shot", he told a group of military graduates in Jakarta two days later. When the government promised an investigation, Sutrisno confidently remarked that "Once the investigation is accomplished, we will wipe out all separatist elements who have tainted the government's policy". President Suharto's removal of two lower-ranking officers involved in the outrage failed to chasten their superiors, who predicted that the United States, which had done nothing about the 1989 Tienanmen Square massacre in Peking, was scarcely likely to intervene in East Timor.

The shock of the Santa Cruz massacre stirred the Holy See to firmer action, and on 10 December a Vatican diplomat, Archbishop Giovanni De Andrea was sent to East Timor as a sign of support for Mgr. Ximenes Belo and to assist his Church through the crisis. "We continue to die as a nation", lamented Dom Carlos in his Christmas message, "We are living in fear, not peace. We suffer, hate, weep and lose hope".

Unbroken in Spirit

East Timor's courageous bishop stated recently that in spite of repeated threats against him, he was determined to stand by his people in their just struggle for freedom and would "suffer in joy" with them. This was not mere rhetoric on his part, for there is still no end in sight to Indonesia's campaign to destroy the Maubere as a nation. The bulk of the rural population have been herded out of their traditional villages and placed in resettlement camps. As for Dili and the towns, house-to-house searches have become regular occurrences. Country markets are forbidden and travel permits are now required for Timorese wanting to travel within the province. While Indonesian transmigrants pour into *Timor Timur*, pregnant Catholic women are coerced into having abortions, while others are given forced injections of the harmful contraceptive Depo-Provera or fitted with the equally dangerous Norplant contraceptive implant. Last December the Indonesian army shut down the Liceu São José in Dîli, the last private school in East Timor offering a syllabus of instruction in Portuguese (for which indiscretion it had been starved of essential government funding). Finally, with the introduction last July of Indonesian agrarian law in place of the old Portuguese land regulations, Maubere peasants not already in resettlement camps are being deprived of their hereditary land, while the position of the transmigrants is consolidated. Both the Church and Governor Carrascalão have protested in vain against this "second invasion".

The present plight of Mgr. Belo's flock, a Catholic minority in a largely Islamic society, is no different from that of the Copts in Egypt or the Aramaic-speaking Christians of Iraq. It was summed up a few months ago by an Indian journalist in Dîli who wrote that:

> "At the heart of the problem is government policy for integrating into Muslim-dominated Indonesia the territory of 750,000 people who are mainly dark-skinned, passionately Catholic, and whose cultural outlook is still oriented towards Portugal" (MET, p. 4).

If in East Timor today Fretilin and the FALINTIL guerrillas led by Alexandre ('Xanana') Gusmão are a spent force in no position to liberate the country from Indonesian rule, their continued resistance has great symbolic value for the mass of the people who remain unbroken in spirit. Such was the impression of Mr. Paddy Kenneally, an Irish Australian World War II veteran who visited East Timor again in 1990:

> "In East Timor I saw a population of second-class citizens, picking up the crumbs the Indonesians throw their way. They are held in subjection by armed might alone. No love for their masters, no hope for themselves the way things are at present. No good jobs, no chance to run a business, with any protest resulting in arrest, beatings and torture. They are a frightened people but there's a great big 'but'. They haven't surrendered in the minds and hearts. The men still fighting in the mountains are the legends their future resistance will be based on". [*Opening Up*, pp. 29–30.]

With few exceptions the East Timorese are united in their wish to rid themselves of their present overlords and to live in peace again; what form the desired self-determination will take is for them another, secondary question.

Unfortunately Timorese Catholics can hope for little support from the government of Australia, which, in the interests of good politico-economic relations with Indonesia, still considers that country's annexation of East Timor not only legal but irreversible. Furthermore, Canberra has tied its own hands by signing with Indonesia a treaty for the exploration of oil in the Timor Gap. Bob Hawke's statement in 1990 that "big countries cannot invade small neighbours and get away with it" held good for prosperous Kuwait, not for destitute East Timor. And Indonesia has kept up its threats to close the airways over its territory and its seas to Qantas and Australian shipping, the economic consequences of which our government is not prepared to face.

Once again the eyes of the world are on East Timor, but with the decline of ideology our vision is clearer than it was in the past. The sixteen-year old nightmare of the Maubere people goes on, and the outcome of current Portuguese and international pressures on Jakarta is difficult to predict. What the people of East Timor should be able to count on are the prayers and moral support of Australian Catholics, whose religion teaches them that human bodies are more precious than money, and that human souls are more important than ideas. As Christians our first loyalty must be not to any economic or ideological allies in a Moslem-dominated state notorious for its brutality, but to these suffering brothers and sisters in faith on our northern doorstep.

Adapted from a paper delivered to the Campion Fellowship Conference, St. Patrick's College, Manly, 30th December, 1991.

Recent Visitors' Impressions of Occupied East Timor

"This is one of the world's sadder places. It is a place where 100,000 to 200,000 died from 1974 to 1980 in a brutal civil war and invasion through combat, execution, disease and starvation. . . a larger percentage of the population than died in Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge. Despite Indonesia's considerable effort at development — schools, roads, bridges, harbours, television — Timorese remember the harsh years after the invasion when thousands fled to the parched mountains and tried to survive helicopter gunships, free fire zones, the burning of their crops, and a military that suppressed all resistance".

— Steve Erlanger, *New York Times*, 1990.

"After three weeks in East Timor the strongest impression was the complete division between the two races, especially the women. The ones who are thin, barefoot, walking in the dust of the road, carrying heavy objects on their shoulders, are Timorese; the ones who wear beautiful clothes and have smooth, glossy hair, the ones who are overly plump and ride in cars or taxis, are Indonesian".

— Shirley Shackleton, October 1989.

"Church membership has more than doubled since the Indonesian takeover, a change which has often been ascribed to the Church's role as principal protector of the ordinary people against the Indonesian military presence. Priests and nuns have been immensely important in maintaining hope and a will to go on living among people whose lives have been shattered by traumatic experiences".

— Pat Walsh, ACFOA, 1991.

"It seems priests are the only ones the population has confidence in to tell of their distressing plight and of the gross injustices they are subjected to by the Indonesian military forces. After meetings with the priests I felt sometimes quite sick, outraged, helpless and always overcome with humility. What I was very impressed with was their noble, fighting spirit, and their indomitable courage to resist this oppression, rather than become cynical and drown".

— Australian visitor, September 1989.

"People at Lospalos told us that when they are sick they go to the Nuns for help. They said there is no point going to the hospital because for a start they are not treated caringly or well and in any case there is no medicine there. The Nuns told us that the relatives of their Mother Superior, who is Italian, supply them with medicines. People who approach the Nuns for help and can afford to pay do so, while others are given medicine and treatment free".

— Patsy Thatcher, September 1990.

"Every Timorese to whom I talked about self-determination, including those who accept integration as a *fait accompli*, agreed that the great majority of Timorese are unreconciled to Indonesian rule and would change their political status if they could. A senior foreign priest took the same view, though he regarded this aspiration as quite unrealistic".

— British visitor, April 1991.

"I was in Dili, East Timor, on the morning of November 12th, when a large crowd of East Timorese gathered in a parish church. They were there to attend a memorial Mass for Sebastião Gomes, a young man who had died outside the church two weeks before. His blood was still caked on the low stone steps at one side of the building, and mourners occasionally knelt and touched it and then crossed themselves".

— *New Yorker* journalists, 9.12.1991

"Right in front of us, they were kicking an old man in the face and slamming him into a concrete sewer. Apparently because we were from the United States, however — a country that provided Indonesia with fifty million dollars in outright aid this year, and sells it most of its weapons, including M016s — the soldiers decided not to shoot us."

— *New Yorker* journalists, 9.12.1991.

"I looked across at Bobonaro and there, high up on the summit of the mountain behind the town, was a huge white cross, visible for miles. I looked up at it and then down the valley, thousands of feet below, ridged and ringed by towering mountain peaks, and above them all, the white cross, standing like a sentinel on the highest peak. It was symbolic for, in truth, the only protection the people of East Timor have today is represented by that cross — their cause kept alive by a few hundred resolute men facing enormous handicaps and odds. I felt a little more optimistic about East Timor's ultimate fate. That cross renewed much of my own faith".

— Paddy Kenneally, April 1990.

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